

## SELECTED HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TUCANNON RIVER AREA

This handout provides selected photographs from “An extensive reconnaissance of the Wenaha National Forest in 1913” by George A. Bright. This report was reprinted in its entirety, along with supplementary photographs and editor’s annotations, by David C. Powell in 1994. Although currently out of print, the report can be viewed and printed from the Umatilla National Forest history website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/publications/history/index.shtml>

George A. Bright completed a comprehensive assessment (termed a reconnaissance in his day) for the northern half of the Umatilla National Forest in 1913. One of the most interesting features of Bright’s report is the photographs, which were taken by M.N. Unser, a professional Forest Service photographer. Many of Unser’s photographs are available from the Still Pictures section of National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland (contact [stillpix@nara.gov](mailto:stillpix@nara.gov) for more information).

Until 1920, the northern half of the Umatilla National Forest (consisting of the Pomeroy and Walla Walla Ranger Districts) was a separate national forest: the Wenaha National Forest. It had a Supervisor’s Office in Walla Walla, and eight ranger district offices (four of which were in Oregon and four in Washington).

This handout provides half a dozen photographs from Bright’s report, all of which pertain to the Tucannon River drainage where this field trip is being held.



Plate 1: “Tucañon Ranger Station” (photograph taken by M.N. Unser in 1913). According to a history of the northern Blue Mountains by Gerald J. Tucker (1940), this ranger station cabin was constructed in the fall of 1907. The structure was rehabilitated by the Forest Service in the early 2000s (with much of the work occurring in 2002). It is interesting that this structure was originally built by a contractor (rather than the Forest Service), and it is the oldest contractor-built Forest Service structure in the Pacific Northwest Region.

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Plate 9: "Excellent yellow pine timber in a draw tributary to Tucañon River. Areas covered by timber in such draws are isolated, although the timber itself is often of excellent quality. This is a small mill proposition" (photograph taken by M.N. Unser in 1913).

[Editor's Note: Someone (possibly Irving Smith, Pomeroy District Ranger in 1962-1968) wrote on the original copy of the report that this photograph may have been taken in School Canyon.]

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**“Photo Number:** 61932. **Locality:** Wenaha Forest, Columbia County, Washington. **Date:** August 16, 1906. **Photographer:** H.D. Foster. **Altitude:** 2400'. **Soil:** Clay loam. **Rock:** Basalt and lava. **Type:** Canyon bottom. **Location:** [Section 10, T. 9 N., R. 41 E.?] **Subject:** A typical farm on the reserve. This farm (C. H. Waterman's) is patented under the homestead laws. It lies in the bottomland of the Tucañon. This canyon bottom has agricultural land for some distance up, and is taken up in claims, as far up as the south line of Township 9 North. Charred stumps show the former presence of a yellow pine forest.”

[Editor's Note: When this photograph was taken, the Wenaha was a Forest Reserve.]



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**“Photo Number:** 61924. **Locality:** Wenaha Forest, Columbia County, Washington. **Date:** August 8, 1906. **Photographer:** H.D. Foster. **Altitude:** About 2600'. **Subject:** A sawmill operated under permit on the Wenaha Forest Reserve, showing log yard. Run by water power; circular saw; daily capacity 10,000 feet.”

[Editor's Note: Someone wrote on the bottom of the card on which the photograph is mounted that this mill may have been located near the site of the Tucannon Ranger Station.]



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**“Photo Number:** 61930. **Locality:** Wenaha Forest, Columbia County, Washington. **Date:** August 15, 1906. **Photographer:** H.D. Foster. **Altitude:** 2400'. **Slope:** North. **Location:** On Waterman’s Land (approximately in section 10, T. 9 N., R. 41 E.). **Subject:** The Tucañon Creek looking down stream (North). One of the perennial streams of the reserve. The river drops a little less than 100 feet to the mile. There is good water power to be had on this stream. 3 miles above a sawmill is run by its power, and a project is now “on” for the development of electric power and lighting for the cities below from its power. **Species:** On its banks: Red Fir, Yellow Pine, White Fir, cottonwood, Balm of Gilead, Alder, Mountain Maple, etc.”

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Plate 43: "The Forest Service trail down the ridge into Tucañon Creek. Timber on the canyon walls is mostly small Douglas fir growing in the more protected places, with large trees in the bottom and running up the secondary canyons for a short distance. The irregular white object in the center of the picture is a ploughed field" (photograph taken by M.N. Unser in 1913).

[Editor's Note: Several copies of this photograph are contained in the Umatilla National Forest historical files in Pendleton, Oregon. The file copies are labelled as showing the "Hixson Gulch trail, built by Forest Service, showing switch-backs. Sec. 27, T. 9 N., R. 41 E."]

This handout was prepared by David C. Powell in June 2007 for a Whitman College alumni field tour of the School Fire area on the Pomeroy Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest.